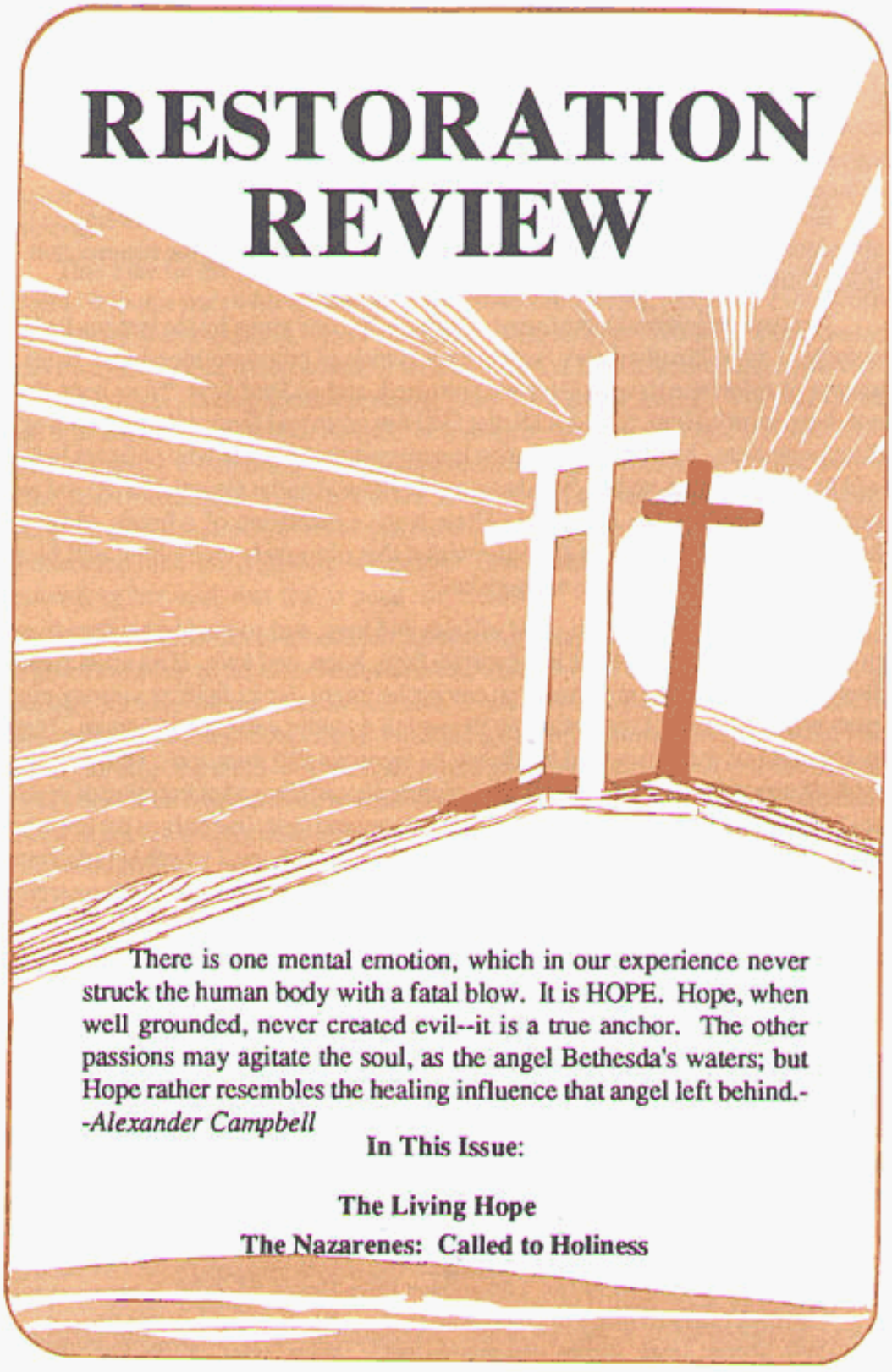
RESTORATION REVIEW



There is one mental emotion, which in our experience never struck the human body with a fatal blow. It is HOPE. Hope, when well grounded, never created evil--it is a true anchor. The other passions may agitate the soul, as the angel Bethesda's waters; but Hope rather resembles the healing influence that angel left behind.--*Alexander Campbell*

In This Issue:

The Living Hope

The Nazarenes: Called to Holiness

Volume 31, No. 2 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **February, 1989**

Volume 31, No. 2 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **February 1989**

The Hope of the Believer . . .

Restoration Review, Vol. 31, No. 2, February 1989

The Hope of the Believer... No.2

THE LIVING HOPE

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Pet. 1:3)

The best definition I have found of hope is that one given by the famous British preacher Leslie Weatherhead: "a firm expectation of promised blessing." Hope is always in reference to what God has promised, and so Paul says "Now hope does not disappoint" (Rom. 5:5). Of all that God has promised there will not be a single disappointment. Moffatt's translation is appropriate: "No one who believes in him will be disappointed, no one." So hope can be defined as the assurance that God will perform all that He has promised. Hope is the expectation of a future, always a future, no matter what. It is the expectation that ultimately everything will be all right, however wrong things seem to be.

Hope may be seen as the child of faith and love, and so Paul in his love hymn in 1 Cor. 13 joins the three as inseparable, faith, hope, and love. If an artist should attempt to capture this great truth on canvas he might depict faith as a strong man, quiet and confident. Love might be likened to a tender and caring woman. Hope as the child of the two would be shown as vigorous and vivacious, with her eyes looking upward into the future. Such a picture should have a background of serene color, indicating that all three of them, faith, hope, and love, live only in the presence of God. This is why the apostle Peter refers to "a living hope," which is redundant, for there is no real hope that is not living. It lives because it is rooted in the presence, power and promises of God as manifest in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

So hope and God are meaningfully linked in Scripture. When the psalmist says "Hope thou in God" he seems to give the sum and substance of religion. And when Paul refereed to some as "having no hope and without God in the world" he seemed to make the phrases equivalent, for if one is without God he is without hope, and if he is without hope he is without God. What a difference it makes when one believes in God! Without such faith one hardly rises above the level of a cultivated animal, and he has no hope beyond this world. He has no future beyond his few fleeting years here. But with God he is spirit and can dream of

an eternal, spiritual universe. Without God we live in a world that is on a collision course, an existence that has no meaning. With God we become pilgrims in this world, but not displaced persons, in that we are adventuring on into eternity, into an unseen world "whose builder and maker is God." God is the God of the future as well as the God of the past and the present.

This may be the most important thing about hope, that it makes sense of this world. It took a poet who walked with God, like John Keats, to speak of this world as "the vale of soul making." How inspiring! That concept within itself can change one's way of looking at the world. It tells us that God is up to something in our kind of world: He is making souls, preparing them for another world. My dear Ouida has now cared for her feeble mother for almost seven years. While it is a labor of love it is also a tough discipline. Sometimes she says to me, when her patience is tried, that God must be trying to tell her something. I tell her that God in His mercy has great things in store for her in another world, an assignment that requires special preparation, and He is getting her ready. John Keats would tell her that God is cultivating her soul, that that is what life is about.

How beautiful it is to see life as soul making! And that is what hope is all about. It gives meaning to an otherwise senseless world - all the suffering, heartache, disease, tribulation, injustice is bearable if one believes there is another world in which everything will be set right. Nothing is more unbearable and agonizing than to bury an innocent child-it seems so brutal and unjust—but even that can be dealt with when there is hope of life beyond death. What solace it is for a parent to believe that it is not the end for that child but actually the beginning, that in another world God will fulfill His intention for that child, including soul growth! What a blessing it is to believe that we will one day see the loved ones that we have to surrender to the pale rider of death in this world! There is always a future, always a tomorrow, and it is God's tomorrow! When we leave this world we are not leaving home but going home. All the good will be rewarded; all the wrongs will be set right. Hope is the child of that kind of faith.

Skeptics and merchants of despair can always discredit hope on the ground that we have a lot of disturbing questions, such as why a loving and powerful God allows so much gross evil in our world. It is a world in which the weak, the innocent, the poor, and the aged have to suffer the most. Evil is so pervasive and inexplicable, such as the rise of Nazism in one of our most enlightened nations, that the Bible properly refers to it as "the mystery of evil." And yet it is in such a world that we as believers have been begotten again unto a living hope. How can this be? Because we look to the God of hope, He who is depicted as sitting upon His throne and declaring that He will make all things new, that there will be anew heaven and a new earth.

We know that God and His ways are beyond all that we can ask or think, beyond our fondest dreams and wildest guesses. He has qualities that we cannot even begin to understand. Yes, of course, God does things or allows things to happen that confuse and bewilder us. Why do famines, floods, and earthquakes blight our world with such fury, especially upon the nations least prepared to cope with them? Why do terribly bad things happen to especially good people? I cannot answer those questions, and I confess my frequent bewilderment. In spite of this, or perhaps because of this, I anchor my life in the living hope.

We may sometimes think of ourselves as children anticipating a joyous Christmas who hear their father come home drunk, bereft of both presents and food. Apparently forgotten by their father, the children weep their disappointment into their pillows. We know that even with earthly fathers sad tales like that are often turned into stories of joy. How much more with our heavenly Father! Can we believe that he would put us in a world where there are so many arguments against a living hope unless He could answer them all? While we may sometimes be tempted to feel lonely, even forsaken, in this cruel world, we can be assured of the promise, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). To believe that is to be borne up by a living hope, which is the source of great joy. As Heb. 13:6 goes on to say, "So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'"

But it is easy to be fearful in a world like ours. God knows that. That does not mean that we have no hope. The great heroes of the Bible knew times of fear and doubt. Not many of us could write of his experiences as Paul did: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor 4:8-9).

Nor are we to suppose that we have to have a blueprint or a time-table of future events. If He who notes the sparrow's fall knows the way, it can be an uncharted course insofar as we are concerned. Our task is simple even if rigorous: to be faithful and trust the future to God. We can pray "Thy kingdom come" even when we know little about what the fulness of that kingdom will be, and nothing about when it will be. But even without a blueprint or a time-table we can believe that one day peace will triumph and injustice will be overcome.

A living hope is not passive. It is always out on the growing edge and at work. It is noteworthy that when Paul spoke of "the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory," it was in the context of his work as a minister for Christ. He goes on to say, "To this end, I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me" (Col. 1:29).

Christ in you, the hope of glory! To this end I labor! This shows that those who have a living hope are themselves alive, bearing fruit, energized by the God of hope. Hope is always at work, knowing that its labor is not in vain. Not only do we "plow in hope," as Paul once said, but we plow because we hope and hope because we plow. Our hands always on the plow and never looking back, that's not bad. But its all right to look ahead and up! —*the Editor*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

The Hope of the Believer . . .

Restoration Review, Vol. 31, No. 2, February 1989

WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH OUR BURDENS?

There are three answers to this question in the Bible which appear to be incompatible:

Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you. (Ps. 55:22)
Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 6:2)
For each person shall bear his own burden. (Gal. 6:5)

Logic and experience alike teach us that while each of these has an element of truth, each is also partly misleading and is not to be made to mean too much. None of us can bear his or her own burden alone as the last one instructs, for we are all dependent on many others in whatever we do. Even in getting my own job and paying my own way, I depend on a multitude of others for transportation, food, clothing, shelter, work, and all that we call life. No man is an island unto himself, as the poet assures us, and no one is wholly self-sufficient. That is why Paul may overstate his case when he says in Gal. 6:4, "then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." It is hard to see how one can "rejoice in himself alone" whether he has baked a cake, scored a touchdown, preached a sermon, or been elected governor. If life teaches us anything at all it is that we not only need one another but must absolutely have one another.

And yet there is a sense in which we are to bear our own burdens and not be dependent on others. Sloth is named as one of the seven deadly sins, and we are by nature inclined to be indolent. We are tempted to be leaners, whether on our welfare state, our parents, or our friends. We may too often let the other fellow pick up the check and do more than his share of the work. Even amidst sorrow and sickness we may be too dependent on others. In old age we must resolve as strength allows to stand tall and self-reliant. We do not always have to be "once a man, twice a child" as Shakespeare insisted.

Sometimes the need to bear one's own burden becomes grimly evident, as in the story of the young man who deserted his widowed mother. He would not answer her letters or respond to the pleas of her minister. When the minister wired the boy that his mother was dying, the prodigal returned. When he entered her hospital room, the mother gave a fleeting smile of welcome and died. When the boy looked upon her still form and saw the traces of anguished worry in her countenance, he knelt beside her bed and shook the room with his sobs. It was a burden he had to bear alone.

It is noteworthy that "Bearing one another's burden" is not only an apostolic admonition but the law of Christ. This shows that Christ does have laws and that his followers are to honor them. That we can't be justified before God by law-keeping but only by grace does not mean that there are not laws to keep. The law of Christ in this context is probably the law of love, which we fulfill when we bear each other's burdens. It could also be seen as the law of friendship, for that is what it means to be a friend, lobe there when one is needed. The best definition of friend that I have seen is this: "A true friend is one to whom you can tip out all of the contents of your heart, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest hands will take and sift it' keep what is worth keeping, and with the breath of kindness, blow 'he rest away." That illustrates what it means to bear one another's burden.

And yet we can never completely bear the burden of another. We can only share the burden. Only this week I visited an aged sister in Christ in a Dallas hospital, a longtime friend to Ouida and me. A widow, she has lived alone in her apartment, able to care for herself; but now having fallen and broken a hip, she may have to go to a nursing home, which she terribly dreads. She fears the future with all its uncertainty. When I heard of her added burden, I was glad that I could share it. But is there any way that I can bear it for her? I sat with her, prayed with her, and assured her that God will be with her and work things together for her good even in a nursing home. And if need be I can help financially. But I can't take her broken hip or take her place in the wheelchair. When she goes to the nursing home I can be there to assure her once more that she will be all right whatever happens, for she is within the shadow of His wings. In *sharing* her burden if not in actually bearing it I fulfill the law of Christ.

It is the first answer to the question of what we are to do with our burdens that troubles me the most, for I wonder if we can really cast our burdens on the Lord. It is beautiful language, especially in song, but is it true? The greatest burden any man ever bore was that of the Cross, and he who bore it looked to the God of heaven for deliverance. "If ii be possible, let this cup pass from me," Jesus implored as he faced cruel Calvary. He was given the strength to bear it, but did the Father bear it for him? The history of the church is a story of burden-bearing - hardship, persecution, imprisonment' martyrdom. They always bore the burdens, with God's help, and did not "cast them upon the Lord."

There is a lot of unreality in what we say and sing in worship to God, such as that line:

Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold.

What do you suppose our heavenly Father thinks of us sitting in church with our bank accounts, CD's, annuities, Social Security, and all the rest seriously singing such a line as that? We would be mortified at the thought of doing anything like what we were singing! And there is that line that dares to say to God, "Mercy drops round us are falling, but for the showers we plead." Mercy drops, indeed! There are some lines in our hymnal that we simply should not sing, even when allowing for poetic license, such as "And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other has ever known." Not St. Francis, not Mother Teresa, not even our own dear parents in all their years of serving God -only God and us have known such joy! Another song has the line "Labor is rest and pain is sweet, If thou my God art there." Nobody really believes that pain is ever sweet' not even the greatest of saints. I hesitate to sing some things lest I hear an ancient prophet say to us what he said to those of old, "God will take away the music of your songs."

We say a lot of things in church that we can't possibly mean, and I think "Cast your burden on the Lord" may be one of them. Nobody really does that or can do it. We can look to God for the strength and courage to bear life's toilsome burdens and even to deliver us from what is too much for us to bear, as He has promised, but being a child of God in our troubled

world is not so simple a matter as casting our burdens on anybody else, not even God. The burdens of life are part of our discipline. God's purpose for us would be thwarted if religion were a matter of unburdening ourselves on some deity, just as you would do your child a disservice if you did his math problems for him.

There is that hymn that says what I have in mind, except that it goes one line too far:

To Thee I bring my care,
The care I cannot flee.
Thou wilt not only share,
But bear it all for me.

The last line is not true, and that is where we often go wrong as Christians in dealing with our problems. God *shares* our burdens but He does not always *bear* our burdens. I take it that that is what 1 Pet. 5:7 means, "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." The load that I have to bear, perhaps because of my own folly, is made lighter when I know that God cares. And I don't have to be overly anxious and fearful, even when I'm pained by the burden, for I know that God is with me and he will give me victory in one way or another. He may take the burden away, true, and we know He sometimes does that, but "If not," as those Old Testament heroes prayed, He will use it for our good, if not in this world then in the world to come. "Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8) is no mean promise.

Paul's attitude toward his grievous thorn in the flesh is to the point. The pain was *not* sweet, and he prayed time and again that it would be taken from him. The Lord's answer was, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." This led the apostle to conclude, "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9). He went on to say that for this reason he not only rejoiced in his infirmities but in reproaches and persecutions as well. That is how he handled his burdens.

And that is my answer, which is in essence the three answers that the Bible gives, properly balanced and interpreted. What are we to do with our burdens? Bear them with the help of God's grace, knowing that He will work for our good and for His glory. Most importantly, we are to help others bear their burdens, especially those that are within our orbit. I feel an obligation toward the bird that injures itself flying into my glass door, for it has flown within my orbit. That doesn't mean I'm obligated to every bird in the world.

Paul, like our Lord, never seemed to think in terms of unloading his burdens but in bearing them meaningfully. We probably have the best answer of all to life's inevitable struggle with adversity in these words from his pen: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). — *the Editor*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

The Hope of the Believer . . .

Restoration Review, Vol. 31, No. 2, February 1989

BAPTISM: ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

There are many dimensions to baptism. In Tit. 3:5 it is described as "the washing of regeneration" - not regeneration itself, but the bath of regeneration, which indicates that baptism is the culmination of the regeneration (born again) process, which begins with and is rooted in faith. Baptism is also in some sense "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38) - not in every sense and certainly not in an absolute sense, but in some sense, otherwise it would not be an apostolic injunction. Alexander Campbell, who championed the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins in a day when it was virtually ignored, said that one is *actually* saved at the point of his faith in Christ *and formally* saved when he is baptized. This would make baptism for the remission of sins in a formal or legal sense. But to Campbell this made baptism no less important and no less necessary, *formally* necessary, something like a wedding or a naturalization ceremony is necessary.

Other Scriptures definitely relate baptism to salvation, such as Christ's command in Mk. 16: 16, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," and 1 Pet. 3:21, "baptism now saves you." Then there are those passages that relate baptism to purification, "Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling upon his name" (Acts 22:16); to identification with Christ, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27); to incorporation in the Body of Christ, "For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13); to the illumination of the Spirit, "those who were once enlightened" (14eb. 6:4). While this verse is less commonly related to baptism, it is probable that "once enlightened" alludes to the time when the people referred to were baptized. One reason for this is that baptism is conjoined to the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

One of the most remarkable dimensions of baptism is its description as the working of God after the order of the resurrection of Christ: "buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Col 2:12). Those who would minimize baptism (note that it is referred to as a burial in this passage) as a work performed by man should be persuaded by this passage that baptism is the work of God, which He does in reference to the faith of the believer. The same working of God that raised Christ from the dead raises the believer to a new life from his burial in baptism. This is evident by the reference in the preceding verse to "the circumcision of Christ" which is made without hands. Is not Paul saying that when a believer is baptized he is circumcised in his heart by Christ himself, which is the work of God? One can hardly have a more exalted view of baptism than this.

Equally impressive is that in the two documents where Paul says the most about justification by faith apart from works of the law he makes strong statements about baptism. Including himself, he writes in Rom. 6:4, "Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Then in Gal. 3:27 he says that we put Christ on in baptism, as quoted above. In verse 26 he explains that this is how we are saved through faith. It never occurred to Paul in writing these great documents on salvation by faith that baptism could possibly be viewed as a way of earning one's salvation. It is rather viewed as the way people are saved by faith.

There is a further dimension to baptism that I want us to consider in some detail, for it seems to tie all the others together in that it describes baptism in terms of the believer's response to God, as "the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet. 3:21). It is an amazing figure of speech, likening baptism to a kind of "pick up the phone" response to God's call. The Greek word for *answer* is variously rendered as "pledge" (NIV), "request" (Sconfield), "appeal" (Phillips), "promise" (TEV). To see baptism as a pledge can mean either "a pledge of a good conscience" or "a pledge to maintain a good conscience." But "answer" in the sense of a response-baptism is our conscientious response or answer to God's grace - is probably closest to the meaning. In submitting to baptism we are answering God's call, we are making the response that He ordained for the purpose, for baptism is God's own decree.

Some scholars, such as G. R. Beasley-Murray in his *Baptism in the New Testament,* suggest that in 1 Peter we have a baptismal treatise that was composed as part of a baptismal service, which would mean that 1 Pet. 3:18-21 was read to those being baptized. They point to the words "Baptism now saves us" (present tense) as an indication that believers were being baptized even as the words were read. Other such references, such as Tit. 3:5 ("He saved us through the washing of regeneration"), is aorist tense, pointing to completed action.

However that may be, those words "baptism now saves us" are very difficult for anyone who sees no connection between baptism and salvation. There must be some important sense in which baptism saves or the apostle Peter would never have written those words. He makes it clear that he is not referring to the water itself as having cleansing or saving power, for he adds "not the removal of the *filth* of the flesh" — that is, one might go into the water with dirty feet and come out with dirty feet, but Still there is a cleansing, an inner cleansing. That is when he says baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward God.

Why does he say that baptism saves? He sees baptism as an anti-type (an act that points back) of those who were saved in Noah's ark, eight souls. God's longsuffering waited patiently in those disobedient days when the ark was being prepared, he tells us in verse 20, "in which a

few, that is eight souls, were saved through water." Again, we can only conclude that in some sense water saved those eight souls. It *was through* water that the ark delivered them from the sinful world. The type, pointing to Christian baptism, is easy enough to understand. If the water drowned the wicked, it saved the righteous. If one insists that it was the ark and not the water that saved Noah, he can argue his case with the apostle Peter. For the point that he had in mind, making Noah's salvation a type of baptism, the apostle saw Noah saved by or through water.

He goes on to say, "the like figure" or the anti-type "baptism now saves us." So Noah's salvation pointed to Christian baptism and Christian baptism points back to Noah. Noah was saved through water and we are saved by baptism! The language is undeniable. Those who have apoplexy at the thought of baptism saving in any sense will have to contend with what is written.

The apostle makes clear the sense in which baptism saves. It is "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The translators have properly used a parenthetical phrase after "baptism saves" and before "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." That phrase is "(not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)." The parenthesis explains how baptism saves us through Jesus' resurrection. It is not in the water itself but in the response (answer) that the believer makes to God's call of grace. Does baptism then save? Yes, of course, that is what the apostle says. Baptism saves us in what it represents in the resurrection of Christ. In baptism we are buried with Christ in a death like his and are raised in a resurrection like his (Rom. 6:5). In doing this we "pick up the phone" and answer God as it were. He calls us by grace through faith. In baptism we answer the call. It is by faith that we hear the call and believe that God is on the line with His promise of salvation. But we must pick up the phone. We must answer with a good conscience. In fact that is how we make our pledge to God that we have a good conscience in His sight. That is what baptism is and that is how baptism saves.

There is no way in this context to make baptism a work whereby we "do something" to be saved. We have seen that baptism is the circumcision of Christ in our hearts and the working of God. We are saved by grace through faith, and only through faith, but it is a faith that responds to God with a good conscience. And an apostle of Christ assures us that this is what baptism is. Perhaps the way Beasley-Murray puts it will prove helpful. In explaining the meaning of baptism as the answer of a good conscience he writes:

It is a meeting of God and man in the Christ of the Cross and resurrection; it is faith assenting to God's grace and receiving that grace embodied in Christ. This is more important than Noah and the Flood and the disobedient spirits, but all together combine to magnify the greatness of the grace revealed in the suffering and exalted Lord who meets us in the Christian *Baptisma. (Baptism in the New Testament,* p. 262)

Baptism is faith assenting to God's grace and receiving that grace! That says it all. It is similar to Alexander Campbell's description of baptism as "the work of God's grace." But no theologian will put it better than Peter did: baptism is our response to God's call, the answer of a good conscience toward God. — *the Editor*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

The Hope of the Believer . . .

Restoration Review, Vol. 31, No. 2, February 1989

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FEAR GOD?

Cecil Hook

My father moved his family to the virgin soil in West Texas. With a grubbing hoe and a double bitted axe he cleared the heavy mesquite trees. The mesquite supplied our needs for firewood during my upbringing. He could wield that axe with accuracy and force.

As a first generation American, he was austere and a hard working man. Even though he gave himself untiringly in providing for us, he never told me that he loved me or gave me a hug. When we disobeyed him, we were in awe of his displeasure and shrank from his discipline.

Even though I feared when I disobeyed him, I was never in fear of his axe. I had an overall sense of acceptance as a son and was supported by his unexpressed love. Never once did I fear that he might want to destroy me with his axe.

In those times, safety razors and electric shavers had not come into use. My father shaved himself with the usual straight razor which had to be strapped regularly in order to keep it sharp. His double thoned strap hung on a nail on the door facing. Dad had another use for that strap than just to hone his razor; he honed character with it!

While Dad's menacing looking axe brought no fears, I was terrified by his razor strap. Don't misinterpret; he was not an abusive father; he just wanted good kids. And I consider that he was successful in his efforts.

Really, it was not the licking that hurt so much as it was my knowing that I had disobeyed him, aroused his displeasure, and strained the peaceful, loving relationship that we had in the family.

In the Scriptures we are taught to fear God, and there are some awesome demonstrations of his displeasure recorded. At the same time, the greatest attribute of God is shown to be love. In many ways he has demonstrated that love for us. His love begets love in us for him. While accepting us as his children, he has assured us that he disciplines as a father corrects his children.

There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out fear. There is peace and security in our relationship.

I do not live in fear of his axe of destruction in hell; yet I fear his razor strap of discipline which he uses to direct me into being a more mature son of his. God is not bent on destroying me but is intent on saving me so that we can be together forever.

If, however, I should turn my back on him and his Son and deliberately choose a course of rejection and impiety, I would have cause to tremble in constant fear. For such a person, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). But such fear does not afflict the child of his who loves him and is sincerely trying to live in fellowship with him.

We fear his *razor* strap, not his *axe. —1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, TX 78130.*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

The Hope of the Believer . . .

Restoration Review, Vol. 31, No. 2, February 1989

Visiting Other Churches: New Series, No.2...

THE NAZARENES: CALLED TO HOLINESS

I have made it a point to take notice how a church responds to my visit, not only while I am on its premises but afterwards in some kind of follow up. While I found no church unfriendly while attending its service, it was the rare church that was enthusiastically friendly.

Surprisingly, the larger churches appeared to be more friendly, possibly because they have more visitors and are better organized for that purpose. I can only conclude that most churches need to improve in projecting themselves as warm and friendly. I am suspicious that smaller churches have an inferiority complex, for they appear to be awkward in welcoming a visitor. Since the average Denton church (of a total of 70) would have an average attendance of no more than 50 or 60, with visitors very rare, a visitor definitely feels that he is being looked at with a "What's he doing here?" attitude. It was common for me to be the only visitor present. So, one conclusion I have drawn is that the average church does not have many visitors.

As for follow-up, only one church in ten made any effort to contact me further. Two churches, both Baptist, were bold enough to call at my home, and that without calling in advance. I got the impression that such a chore was turned over to the young people. They were inexperienced and it was poorly done. I don't believe that "cold-turkey" home visitation is either wise or effective. In fact I was leaving the house on my way to visit another church when one Baptist party showed up!

Only one phoned me as a follow-up method, but several wrote me a warm letter of welcome, inviting me to visit again. These were mostly the larger, better staffed churches, and it was always the pastor that wrote. Most churches make no provision for a follow up, for the visitor is not asked in some manner to leave his name and address, such as signing a visitor's card. I like visitor's cards, and always sign them, and I am pleased to identify myself as a member of the Church of Christ. I like to surprise people! But it is not uncommon for even a larger church to make no effort to get a visitor's name and address.

If I were to grade the churches I have visited in this regard, the First Church of the Nazarene in Denton would make an A. Not only was I warmly received, as if by a family, when I visited (I didn't feel on the spot as I often do!), but there was also a sincere and meaningful follow-up by way of a letter from the pastor, and that straightway. While such letters often seem routine and perfunctory, this one spoke from the heart and without apology. One paragraph read:

> We are endeavoring to magnify Christ, to make Him real to all who enter our sanctuary. By Spirit-filled singing, Biblical preaching, and the warmth of Christian fellowship, we hope to exalt Christ. God seeks to be personally involved in our lives and our needs. We worship a living, person, an ever-present God and desire our worship to be personal and meaningful.

Not only did he invite me to return but to consider his church as a church home. I got the impression that he meant business when he wrote, "I invite you to consider becoming involved in the ministry of First Church of the Nazarene. There are some really exciting days

ahead for us at First Church. We offer you the opportunity to experience personal growth in Jesus Christ' to become involved in the excitement of a growing church and to be an integral part of our church family."

The visitor's card was impressive. It had a detachable portion that I filled out and put in the collection plate. The part I kept provided considerable information about the Church of the Nazarene under the title "That you may know us better." It told me that they have 8,625 congregations throughout the world, 838,136 members, 1.2 million in Sunday School, and 4,086 pastors. They have 620 missionaries in 84 countries, and their worldwide radio program is carried on 286 stations. They are also on 400 Spanish—king stations, 54 in Portuguese, and six in French. They have a publishing house that turns out 60 million copies of periodicals and 750,000 copies of books each year. They have 34 Bible colleges, 10 liberal arts colleges, and 400 special schools around the world. They also have campus ministry programs at public colleges and universities.

This kind of information acquaints the visitor with the church he is visiting, and leaves the impression that the denomination is serious about what it is doing and will be around for a while. The independent churches and the Bible churches do not have this advantage in that they have no roots and no denominational structure supporting them. They are usually built around a gifted preacher, and one gets the idea that their survival depends on him staying around. No Presbyterian has such insecurity, for she knows that pastors come and go over the years, but that both the congregation and the denomination will remain much the same, decade after decade.

The roots of the Church of the Nazarene are Wesleyan. They are today in spirit something like the Methodists were in their camp-meeting revivals two centuries ago. They emerged from a movement that sought to preserve the Wesleyan doctrine of "entire sanctification," which it believed the Methodists had neglected. Beginning in 1886 a number of Pentecostal and Holiness churches grew out of this movement, all the way from Providence, R. I. to Los Angeles. There were such groups as the People's Evangelical Church, the Holiness Church of Christ, and the Association of Pentecostal Churches. A union of sorts was effected at the turn of the century, forming the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene. In 1919 the name was changed to the Church of the Nazarene.

They have always been both pentecostal and holiness, but pentecostal in the sense that they believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit as "the second blessing," and the sanctified life that this implies, but not in the sense of speaking in tongues. The pastor of the First Church in Denton told me that speaking in tongues would be out of order in his church. But I noticed

that some of them raise hands in prayer and praise. Some Nazarene churches are more "demonstrative" in this regard than others, which is the only real difference between the two Nazarene churches in Denton.

The Nazarenes are generally mainline Protestant in doctrine, and so their Articles of Faith are not all that different from most churches. Their uniqueness would be in what they emphasize. They not only believe that the Holy Spirit is part of the Triune Godhead, but that he sanctifies believers. They believe in original sin and that it continues to exist in the believer "until eradicated by the baptism of the Holy Spirit." In a radical departure from Calvinism, they believe in free agency, and that even though the Christian possesses "the experience of regeneration and entire sanctification" he may fall from grace and apostatize, and unless he repents will be eternally lost. While they believe in the second coming of Christ, they take no position on the nature of the millennium.

While they generally baptize only believers and by immersion, they also allow for sprinkling and pouring. If parents request it, they will baptize children, but advise baptism again when the child becomes a believer. Divine healing is an article of faith, but it is not emphasized.

The most distinctive plea of the Nazarene Church, and one that the rest of us should consider more seriously, is the life of holiness. This is their logo, their central doctrine — "called to holiness." This emphasis may be why their history is one of unions rather than divisions. Unlike most denominations, one does not find a variety of Nazarene sects. Here in Denton their two churches are united and do things together. And yet they are not ecumenical in the usual sense. "The National Council of Churches is too liberal for us," I was told. They are separatists but not sectarian. They recognize all other churches' baptism in accepting members.

Their doctrine of holiness or "Entire Sanctification," which is given more space in their Articles than any other doctrine, is also called "Christian perfection" and even "The baptism of the Holy Spirit." They distinguish between a pure heart, which comes in an instant when one is born again, and a mature character, which is growth in grace unto perfection. A Christian is to set his mind upon "the holiness without which no one shall see the Lord," as the Bible puts it, or entire sanctification, and if he does not have this desire to grow in grace unto holiness he is not truly a Christian.

In spite of its Wesleyan roots, the Nazarene Church is organized more like the Presbyterians than the Methodists. It is not episcopal. Like the Presbyterians, it has four levels of government: the Local Church, the District Assembly, The Region, the General Assembly. There are elders and trustees at the local level, a district superintendent at the district level,

and general superintendents preside over the General Assembly, but in all the judicatories the local church is represented. The Region is a cluster of districts, sometimes embracing large sections of the world.

Practically speaking, I asked the pastor at First Church how he was hired and how he could be fired. The local church calls its own pastor with the assistance of the district superintendent, and this by secret ballot by all voting members. The local church has final say, the superintendent having only veto power, for he can always say "I don't want him in my district." The pastor is fired the same way, not by the elders or trustees or superintendent, but by a 70% vote of the members, again by secret ballot. The exception to this is in the event of a morals charge, in which case the district superintendent as a representative of the General Assembly can immediately strip him of his ordination credentials, and he's through (period).

I was deeply impressed with my visit to both of the Nazarene churches. I found sincerity, warmth, and (this is rare in Denton churches!) a sense of urgency. The members were participants and not mere auditors, sharing and praying together out of common concerns. Historically, the Nazarenes have appealed to a lower economic class, "a church for the poor," which may be why they have continued to grow while mainline churches have seriously declined, that along with their conservative, evangelical message.

If they have any serious denominational problem, it is not theological (They don't fuss and divide like Texas Baptists and Churches of Christ do!), but demographical. Now that they have begun to move into suburbia and have become more middle class their growth has slowed and their traditional uniqueness is more difficult to preserve. We hope they do not have to compromise their call for holiness. We need some Christians around who take holiness seriously! — *the Editor*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

The Hope of the Believer . . .

Restoration Review, Vol. 31, No. 2, February 1989

IN PURSUIT OF TRUTH

Randy Massie

Growing up in the Church of Christ' I was convinced that we were right and everyone else was wrong. The other churches were not honest in their interpretation of the Bible, "ignorant and unstable people who distorted the scriptures to their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16). As I saw it, there were only two sides to any question, my side and the side that no sane, intelligent' self-respecting person could hold. I could not then see the arrogance and divisiveness of such a position.

I now realize that the there are many noble minds beyond my own ranks who love truth and pursue it tirelessly. And I now realize that it is God who is the source of all truth, and that He has disclosed this rich treasure to us in two forms. There is propositional truth, the written word, as in "Thy word is truth." Then there is personal truth, the word incarnate, as in "I am the truth." In this two-fold revelation we have everything we need for life and godliness. While total truth may not have been disclosed, sufficient truth was.

I now see that it is when one embraces Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of personal truth, as Lord, and accepts the Scriptures, which make up the propositional truths, as the only rule of faith and practice, that he is truly in an honest pursuit of truth. This is what repentance means, a change of heart and mind, a subordination of my will to the will of God. While I once saw my own sectarian way of thinking as the standard of truth, it is now Christ and his word.

I also now see that when I first became a Christian I did not have a complete understanding of truth. I had to grow in truth and truth had to be internalized, and so I sought to set my mind on things the Spirit desires (Rom. *8:5).* I am now resolved to accept and obey every truth as it becomes clear to me. This I see as the fruit of repentance.

It is now evident to me that though one may honestly accept this two-fold revelation of Christ as the personal truth and the Bible as the written truth, he will be unaware of certain truths, even in passages of Scripture long familiar to him. I can now readily concede that there are many truths about God and His world that are beyond me, but I am in the pursuit of truth and will be till I die. But our reach for truth will always be beyond our grasp. My daughter is a case in point. While she makes A's in fourth grade math, it would be unreasonable for her teacher to require calculus of her. She is rather graded on how she handles the material within her grasp. She is responsible for what she can know, not for what she can't know.

Is this not how we are to see each other in our mutual pursuit of truth? There is a big difference between what one knows as a newly born Christian and as a maturing Christian. At whatever stage of growth we look to Jesus and his word to keep us on course, but we may

falter along the way and we may be wrong about some things, but we can be assured that He who searches the heart knows whether our failures are the result of willful sin or simply faulty reasoning.

We can treat our sincere differences of opinion as a challenge rather than an obstacle to unity. Who appointed us as judges over one another's consciences? Who anointed us as infallible interpreters? Does not the word teach me to accept the brother who differs with me "without passing judgment on disputable matters" (Rom. 14:1)?

Our Restoration fathers seemed to have understood this better than we do, as in Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address:

> Although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises when fairly inferred may he truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet they are rot formally binding upon the conscience of Christians farther than they perceive the connection.

Campbell here allows for individual growth under God apart from the judgment of others. Each of us is responsible according to his own understanding of Scripture, not another's understanding. We should, however, be able to sit down together and in a spirit of love help each other in the pursuit of truth. As Alexander Campbell assured us, free discussion is the spirit of reformation. That is how new truth comes to light.

An ancient Hebrew prayer well expresses my joyous pilgrimage in the pursuit of truth:

> From the conscience that shrinks from new truth,
> From the laziness that is content with half-truths,
> From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,
> Oh, God of truth, deliver us.

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

The Hope of the Believer . . .

Restoration Review, Vol. 31, No. 2, February 1989

OUR CHANGING WORLD

This year is the 20th anniversary of Integrity, a magazine that has done much for more openness among our people. I was asked to submit an essay for the anniversary year on the changes that have occurred among the Restoration churches over the past two decades, which I believe you will appreciate reading. If you do not receive this journal, we heartily recommend it. The sub rate is a freewill donation, which can be made after you have read the paper for awhile. The address is Integrity, 2919 Lafayette Ave., Lansing, MI 48906.

There is evidence that some of our more open churches are not only more pragmatic but also more creative. What, for instance, might a church do about Super Bowl Sun-day? The Central Church of Christ in Irving, Texas, which may stand alone among our folk in describing itself as "An Ecumenical Fellowship," is not intimidated by the Super Bowl, even if it is played at the time of the evening service. They have a super-screen TV to which they invited the congregation to gather around and watch the big game, and they served super-sub sandwiches. They had a devotional at half-time. Childcare was provided. Now isn't that better than people staying home to see the game or coming to church out of duty and wishing they were seeing the game? However that is, I doff my hat to the Central church, for it is in many ways a super church. Oops! I almost said super bowl church!

Elmer Prout has served as a missionary to Japan for many years. In his Tachiba, a bulletin to American Christians, he wrote about the status of the emperor in Japan, which is of special interest now that the death of longtime emperor Hirohito might bring about change. Elmer reports that many Japanese believe the emperor system should be abolished. Others see the emperor as a symbolic figure, no more than what "In God We Trust" on coins means to Americans. Now it appears to be generally conceded that the emperor is only human and no longer deity, which was a condition of surrender following the war and is now in their Constitution. Elmer tells of Christians who recall the days of "emperor worship." The danger that Elmer sees is that the emperor symbolizes a religion that runs counter to the gospel of Christ. He notes that in a small rice paddy in the Imperial palace the emperor plants and harvests a rice crop each year, which fulfills his role as a priest and the center of ancestor worship. Another Christian minister in that country, a native Japanese, told me a few years back that he suspected that emperor worship would one day be reestablished and that Shintoism would be restored as the state religion. This would necessitate a change in the Constitution, which provides both for freedom of religion and a separation of church and state, which were required by the United States following the war.

The Disciples of Christ are having a problem over a resolution that has been submitted to their Commission on Theology. Commonly referred to as the "Jesus Resolution," it claims in essence that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation, with Acts 4:12 as the reference text: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." In a recent essay in The Disciple John D. Willis, pastor of First Christian Church in Elsberry, Mo., refers to the resolution as a theological hot potato. He sees part of the problem in the fact that most Christians, including most Disciples, believe that there are some heathen and others who do not know Christ who will receive God's mercy. He also points to the Disciples' creedless tradition, noting that the resolution would limit the diverse interpretations of the nature of Christ. But he believes the Disciples would agree to "a central text" if it were the good confession in Mt. 16:16 ("You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"), which he says is the only creed his people have ever had.

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

The Hope of the Believer . . .

Restoration Review, Vol. 31, No. 2, February 1989

READERS' EXCHANGE

Thanks for continuing to help peel away our prejudices. Every layer that is gone gives us a little more freedom. — Gene Jarrett, Morrow, GA.

I wish I had a Church of Christ like yours to go to, where they do not use the organ but do not make it a test of fellowship.— Kenneth Loeffler, Athens, OH.

(I am confident this is the position of the majority in Churches of Christ. For whatever reason, whether biblical or traditional, they want to be non-instrument, but they do not want to be sectarian about it and dechristianize those who use an instrument. It is only a matter of time until most of our churches will be explicitly non-instrument instead of anti-instrument. — Ed.)

Tribute to Carl Ketcherside

(Since these commendations include me, I am reluctant to publish them, but it is appropriate for those who want to "give flowers while you live" to be allowed to do so, and it is most fitting for folk to be able to say nice things about Carl's work while he is yet in the sunset years of his ministry. We all know that a lot of mean things have been said through the years. These are selected from things that have come my way lately. - Ed.)

Members of the Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston gave the Marty Award for 1988 to both Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garret. It read as follows:

The "Marty" Award goes to one who is not quite a martyr, but who has suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous brethren during a long ministry of comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable. To Carl Ketcherside should go honor from a recalcitrant brotherhood for being a frontiersman among Churches of Christ. He has courageously led us in exploring such frontiers as: (1) Open, honest, and non-sectarian examination of the Scriptures; (2) Outreach to the truly lost and truly needy; (3) loving, open fellowship and unity in diversity; and (4)The nature and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the life of the church. He has been a prophet of Christian unity and rationality for his generation of Churches of Christ. FOR THESE AND OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS HE HAS BEEN ASSAILED BY MANY AND THANKED BY FEW. *"For Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country."* — John 4:44

The work you have done over the past three decades is truly remarkable. Because of you and others like Carl Ketcherside the Churches of Christ are slowly but surely moving away from the sectarian exclusivism that has characterized them throughout most of this century. The congregations that cling to that exclusivism are either dead or dying. — *Myer Phillips, Irving, TX*

(I thought it especially appropriate to pass this along since this man wrote his Ph.D. thesis at Baylor on the history of exclusivism in Churches of Christ, in which he gave extended treatment to the longtime unity efforts of two editors, Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett. — Ed.)

I have been a member of the church for 40 years. The church has needed men like you, Cecil Hook, and Carl Ketcherside. We should have listened to you more. — *C. L. Thompson, Rockford, IL*

I want to go on record today as paying tribute to Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett for the great work they have done and for the fruit it has borne among us in changed attitudes and amore open and candid view of the whole church of Jesus Christ. I don't believe there is anyone in this century who his contributed more to the destruction of sectarianism and the development of a scriptural view of the church. They will be recognized by our future

historians; it would be good for us to acknowledge their good work now, while they are living. let us give honor to whom honor is due. It is becoming fashionable today to say the things they were abused for saying 25 years ago. What bothers me somewhat is that the most recent converts to unity want to act as though they are discovering these great truths when they know what Carl and Leroy have been saying for years. It is still not safe, I suppose, to risk being identified with yesterday's "heretics." *—Thomas A. Langford, professor and dean at Texas Tech and an elder in the Quaker Ave. Church of Christ, Lubbock, in an address to leaders of non-class Churches of Christ and others in 1988.)*

You might be encouraged (not flattered) to know that when I gave my large library to a congregation I kept only my favorite commentaries, a few key reference books, and your writings along with Carl Ketcherside's. I only tell you this to allow you some flowers while you live and to remind you of the positive influence that has been made on at least one truth seeking mind, Steven Clark Goad, and others I suspect, with your literary contribution to the cause of Jesus and Christian unity. Thanks for helping me out of the stupefying sectarianism and choking legalism in which I was reared. I felt empathy pain for Carl in reading of the loss of his dear wife. What a blessing he and she were as a team! I thank God for Carl and Nell as I do for you and Ouida.— *Steven Clark Goad, Mesa, AZ., who for years wrote brilliant and provocative articles for several Church of Christ papers, especially the Firm Foundation.*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

The Hope of the Believer . . .

Restoration Review, Vol. 31, No. 2, February 1989

BOOK NOTES

The Bleating Sheep by Robert W. Blackshear is a "crisis" hook emerging from the agonizing needs of Churches of Christ. I read it in manuscript form and urged the author to get it published, and a Church of Christ publisher has now done so. While a quotation from me about the book appears on the back cover, my name does not appear, only "A Prominent Church leader," for the publisher, but not the author, did not want my name to appear. That is why I call it a "crisis" book. It deals with such crises as the ministerial system that has displaced the proper function of elders, the loss of mutual ministry and Body life, the failure

of elders to feed the flock, and our people as "bleating sheep." There are extensive quotations from Carl Ketcherside on the work and qualification of elders. This book calls Churches of Christ to account for how far they have wandered. $5.00 postpaid.

The Fire That Consumes by Edward Fudge is a careful biblical study of the destiny of lost souls. He concludes that there is no unending hell fire but a consuming fire. The wicked are punished, which is hell, and then destroyed or consumed. His basic thesis is that the soul is not by nature immortal, but that immortality (eternal life) is God's gift to the righteous. You may find it convincing. You will at least agree with the noted scholar, F. F. Bruce, who wrote the foreword, that it is worthy of careful consideration. Fudge is a scholar in the Church of Christ. $19.95 postpaid.

The Fool of God by Louis Cochran is a novel based on the life of Alexander Campbell. Ouida and I have read this book aloud to each other twice, and were richly blessed both times. If you want to see the soul of Campbell, this is the book. $12.50 postpaid. *Raccoon John Smith*, by the same author, is an exciting account of a frontier preacher who helped to effect unity between the Stone and Campbell churches, also $12.50 pp.

The Stone-Campbell Movement by Leroy Garrett continues to be appreciated by those who read it. In fact the responses are so positive that this is a title we could sell on a money-back guarantee. $21.95 postpaid, or you can still get a free copy when you send us 8 subs to this journal at the club rate of $3.00 each, $24.00 total, new or renewal, including your own.

You may order all five of our bound volumes *of Restoration Review*, which include the years 1977-1984, for only $40.00 postpaid. These are hard bound, matching volumes of high quality, with dust jackets.

RESTORATION REVIEW, 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas 76201

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

Address all mail to: 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, TX 76201*

RESTORATION REVIEW is published monthly, except July and August, at 1201 Windsor Drive, Denton, Texas. Second class postage paid at Denton, Texas. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: $5.00 a year, or two years for $8.00; in clubs of four or more (mailed by us to separate addresses) $3.00 per name per year. (USPS 044450). POSTMASTER, Send Address changes to RESTORATION REVIEW, 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas 76201.